

Message Text

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44

ACTION NEA-13

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 OS-03 AID-20 CU-04 EB-11 CIAE-00

PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01

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----- 118104

R 071814Z FEB 74

FM AMEMBASSY MANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1050

SECDEF WASHDC

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

INFO AMCONSUL DHAHRAN SAUDI ARABIA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA SAUDI ARABIA

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN IRAN

COMIDEASTFOR MANAMA BAHRAIN

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GERMANY

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON ENGLAND

CNO WASHDC

CINCUSAREUR HEIDLEBURG GERMANY

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAMA 0054

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y CHANGING 4TH THRU 11TH ADDRESSEE
TO INFO INSTEAD OF ACTION

E.O. 11652 : GDS

TAGS : MAAR, PFOR, BA

SUBJECT : MIDDLE EAST FORCE AND THE BAHRAIN SCHOOL

REFS : (A) KUWAIT 0294; (B) JIDDA 214; (C) BAHRAIN 0038

SUMMARY

AFTER TWO WEEKS IN MANAMA MY IMPRESSIONS ARE (A) THAT
BAHRAIN'S ULTIMATE DECISION ON WHETHER WE MAY RETAIN OUR NAVAL
FACILITY HERE DEPENDS OVERWHELMINGLY ON EXTERNAL FACTORS AS
DISTINCT FROM DOMESTIC ISSUES, PARTICULARLY ON THE REACTION
OF KING FAISAL TO AMERICAN PEACE EFFORTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST,
AND (B) THE GOVERNMENT OF BAHRAIN WISHES TO AVOID DISCUSSING
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THE ISSUE UNTIL THE GENERAL MIDDLE EAST SITUATION FURTHER

CLARIFIES ITSELF. THE LINKAGE BETWEEN RETENTION OF OUR NAVAL FACILITY AND A CONTINUATION OF THE BAHRAIN SCHOOL IS CLEAR TO THE GOB, BUT ITS DESIRE TO KEEP THE SCHOOL WILL NOT BE A MAJOR INFLUENCE IN ITS FINAL DECISION ON OUR NAVAL PRESENCE. END SUMMARY.

1) I HAVE ENCOUNTERED ALMOST UNANIMOUS VIEW IN BAHRAIN THAT ULTIMATE GOB DECISION ON AMERICAN NAVAL PRESENCE HERE DEPENDS OVERWHELMINGLY ON EXTERNAL FACTORS, PARTICULARLY ON PROGRESS TOWARD PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND ON HOW KING FAISAL PERCEIVES AMERICAN ROLE IN BRINGING THIS ABOUT. WHILE STUDIOUSLY AVOIDING EXPLICIT REFERENCE TO MIDDLE EAST FORCE, THE RULER AND THE PRIME MINISTER HAVE MADE IT QUITE CLEAR THAT THEY HOPE CONDITIONS WILL PERMIT ITS CONTINUATION IN BAHRAIN. THEY HAVE BEEN EVEN CLEARER, HOWEVER, THAT FINAL DECISION DEPENDS ON ROLE USG PLAYS IN ACHIEVING AN ARAB-ISRAEL DIPLOMATIC SETTLEMENT AND ON HOW OTHER ARABS, ESPECIALLY KING FAISAL, VIEW THAT ROLE. THIS ASSESSMENT OF ESSENTIAL GOB ATTITUDE IS SHARED BY FOREIGN DIPLOMATS, BY AMERICAN AND OTHER FOREIGN BUSINESSMEN HERE, BY BAHRAINI LEADERS GENERALLY AND BY OTHERS IN BAHRAIN WHO WISH THE UNITED STATES WELL. I HAVE SENSED THAT THE GOB WOULD NOT APPRECIATE PURSUING AT THIS TIME QUESTION OF THE BAHRAIN SCHOOL.

2) FOREGOING SHOULD NOT BE TAKEN TO IMPLY ANY DENIGRATION OF ROLE OF RECENTLY ELECTED NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, WHICH CONTAINS UNFORTUNATELY LARGE PERCENTAGE OF LEFTIST AND RADICALS WHO WOULD LIKE TO SEE US PRESENCE HERE REMOVED. BUT ASSEMBLY SHOULD BE VIEWED AT LEAST FOR FIRST PERIOD OF ITS LIFE PRIMARILY IN DOMESTIC BAHRAINI POLITICAL CONTEXT. ASSEMBLY IS IMPORTANT NEW ELEMENT IN BAHRAIN POLITICAL EQUATION, BUT GOB IS NOT LIKELY FOR TIME BEING TO PERMIT IT TO INVOLVE ITSELF DEEPLY IN OTHER THAN BREAD AND BUTTER DOMESTIC ISSUES. THE RULER MADE THIS QUITE EXPLICIT IN MY PRESENCE ON FEBRUARY 4 WHEN HE THREATENED TO "GET RID" OF THE ASSEMBLY IF IT TRIED TO INTERFERE IN BAHRAIN'S EXTERNAL AFFAIRS.

3) THE CURRENT SITUATION HERE IS THAT THE GOB IS WATCHING MIDDLE EAST DEVELOPMENTS WITH THE UTMOST CONCENTRATION WHILE AVOIDING FOR THE TIME BEING ANY DISCUSSION OF US NAVAL PRESENCE
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AND THE BAHRAIN SCHOOL. IT IS WAITING FOR SOME OUTSIDE SIGNAL AFTER WHICH IT MAY WISH TO REASSESS ITS POSITION. A LIFTING OF THE ARAB OIL BOYCOTT COULD BE THE CRITICAL DEVELOPMENT HERE, PARTICULARLY IF ACCOMPANIED BY A POSITIVE AFFIRMATION TO SHEIKH ISA FROM KING FAISAL ON THE DESIRABILITY OF A CONTINUING MIDEASTFOR PRESENCE ON BAHRAIN(JIDDA 214). AT LEAST I BELIEVE WE MUST TRY WITH FAISAL WHEN THE BOYCOTT IS LIFTED, AND THE UNOFFICIAL WORD IN OIL CIRCLES HERE IS

THAT THIS WILL HAPPEN AFTER THE ARAB OIL MINISTER'S CONFERENCE
IN TRIPOLI ON FEBRUARY 14. IF FAISAL IS AGREEABLE TO PASSING
THE WORD TO ISA, THE TIME WILL HAVE COME FOR US TO TRY HERE
TO GET THE GOB TO QUIETLY LET US IGNORE THE TERMINATION NOTICE
ON MIDEASTFOR.

4) AT THE SAME TIME, I AGREE WITH AMBASSADOR STOLTZFUS THAT
IF DEVELOPMENTS SHOULD UNFORTUNATELY NOT BRING SAUDI
ENCOURAGEMENT ON RESCINDING THE MIDEASTFOR TERMINATION NOTICE
WE SHALL EVENTUALLY HAVE TO APPROACH THE GOB ON MIDEASTFOR AND
OUR SCHOOL WITHOUT IT. BUT WE STILL HAVE SOME LITTLE TIME
AND AND SHOULD IF POSSIBLE HOLD OFF MAKING OUR MOVE UNTIL
DEVELOPMENTS IN THE ARAB-ISRAEL CONTEXT HAVE GIVEN US THE
MAXIMUM CHANCE OF GETTING WHAT WE WANT HERE.
KILLGORE

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